



## **Empirical Evidences On Human Rights Violation Of Indigenous People Of Southern India: Major Findings And Suggestions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The problems relating to human rights of indigenous people are varied nature. The author had identified to study five areas of human rights which are categorized as follows: Right to live as human beings with dignity and Equality; Right to Land and natural Resources; Right to work and fair wages; Right to Housing and basic amenities; Right to health Including eradication of Huger and Malnutrition. The methodology of this study is based on both descriptive and analytical research. A pilot study was conducted with a sample size of 30 respondents to check and modify the formulated questionnaire. The author had collected data from 410 Sample of Primitive Tribes of semi-nomadic plain groups, particularly the Irulas from 36 hamlets/villages, Kancheepuram Districts of Tamil Nadu (South India).

**Key words:** Human rights, Indigenous People, Irula Tribes, South India

### **Introduction:**

The socio economic conditions of Irula Tribe in Tamil Nadu, South India are economically oppressed, poor, backward, illiterate, socially cut off from the people of other communities and exploited by other members of the society. The time has come for the Tribal to stand up and struggle, because the successive Central and State Governments have lacked and even totally failed to bring about agrarian reforms or educating the Tribal masses towards carrying out social reforms like the restructuring of society based on justice, dignity, equality and realization of their basic human rights.

This article is focused on the study on the human rights violations of Irula Tribe in the plains, because almost all Tribal Sub-Plan or a few other welfare programmes of the Government are mainly focused on Tribes living in hills of Tamil Nadu. The dispersed Tribes, particularly, Irula Tribe in plains of Kancheepuram district, have not given proper attention to raise their standard of living.

The International Convents and human rights institutions largely direct the conceptual and structural aspects of human rights. To make these more than well-intentioned ideals, efforts are requested to improve the physical conditions of the weaker sections, especially the indigenous people. The indigenous people of the world generally left with four basic needs, namely, the need for (a) Cultural protection; (b) Recognition of ownership of land; (c) Recognition of individual, economic and social (welfare) rights; and (d) Political autonomy. In general terms, every group has varied and different developmental needs, but the indigenous people around the world have common goals, such as: to call themselves by their proper name and to have an independent identity of their own; to have official status and to form their own representative organizations; to maintain the areas where they live in, have their traditional economic structure and way of life; to participate on an equal footing in the economic, social and political development of the society / country; to maintain and use their own language, wherever possible; to enjoy freedom of religious belief; to have access to land and natural resources; and to evolve, conduct and control their own traditional and time-honoured educational system. (Prem Sam Ponniah 2020)

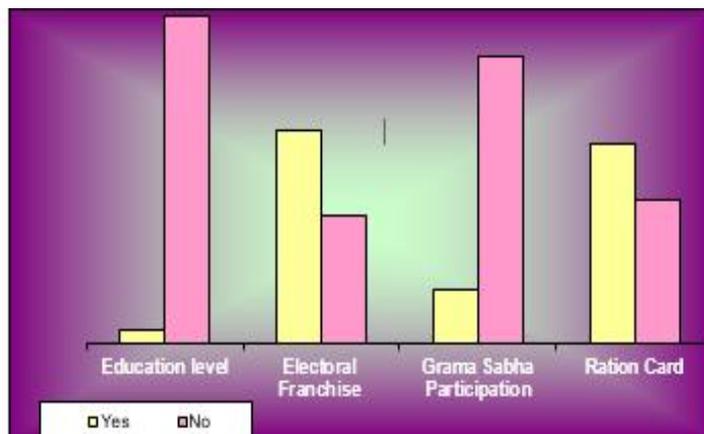
**Empirical Evidences:**

In the present study statistical analyses such as, **Cluster and Discriminant Analysis** were applied. The Tests such as Chi-Square, T-Test, F-Test and Proportions test were also administrated. The Chi-square and significance values are provided to all the variables in the Study.

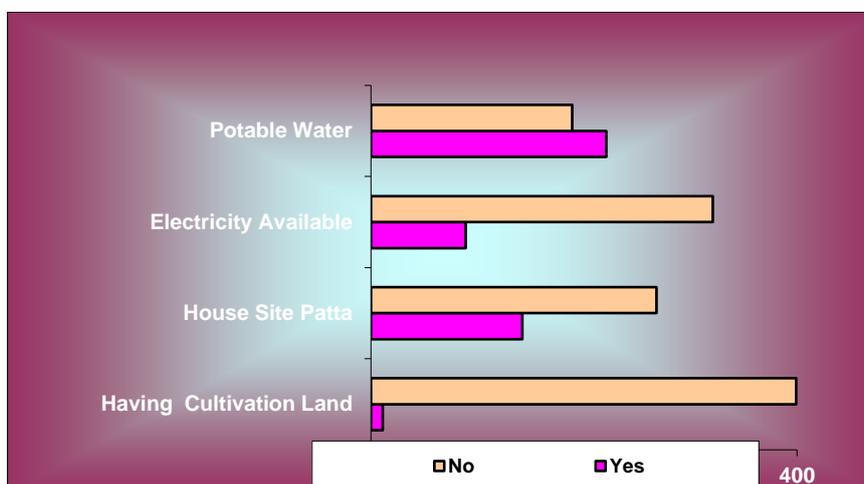
**An overview of cluster analysis** indicates that there are three different types of responses obtained from the Irula Tribe, during the primary survey to study their violation of human rights. Based on the responses, the Irula Tribes are divided into three clusters or groups. The majority Irula Tribe of the first group, though possess land and other properties expressed the view, that that they are denied almost all basic human rights. Majority of the respondents of the second and third groups, do not possess any land, they live in very poor condition and they expressed the denial of basic human rights.

All the aspects that were significantly different in the cluster analysis have been used to discriminate the three groups. Stepwise analysis provides the best discriminant variables among the set of variables provided in the analysis. It has been found only ten variables, viz., type of primary work, sources of money for health care, reasons for not the patta being provided, denial of the part of the Government to promote indigenous technology of snake and rodent catching, secondary work, working hours, types of diseases, availability of medical facilities, availability of school and the quality of rice used by the Irula Tribe. Other variables though found significant in cluster analysis fail to discriminant the three groups of Irula Tribe in the mathematical model. Some of the variable, which indicates the basic need and human rights violations of Irula Tribe are presented in the following Figures.

**Figure 1:** Right to Dignity and Equality



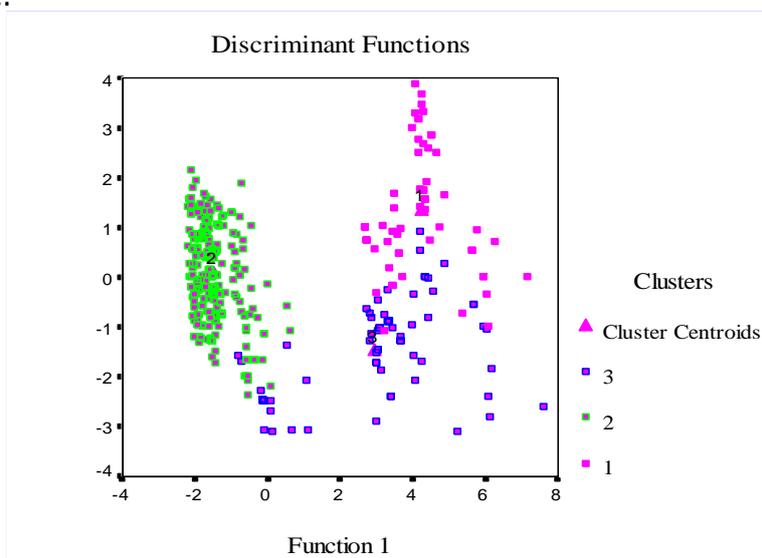
**Figure 2:** Right to Land and Housing and Basic Amenities



**Figure 3:** Right to Food and Free from Starvation.



The graphical representation of the 410 Irula Tribe based on discriminant analysis is given in the following figure.



It is found from the figure that the second group of Irula Tribe, stand apart from the first and third groups and they seem to have more consistent in their opinions on violation of human rights.

An attempt has been made to group the 410 Irula Tribe based on the responses obtained in the primary survey. It is found that the responses provided by the Irula Tribe are not uniform – there are three different types of responses. It is established that there are three different types of opinions obtained in the survey using cluster analysis. It is also attempted to construct mathematical models that would discriminate the three groups using discriminant analysis. Though a large number of aspects are found to be significant in the cluster analysis, only the following aspects are found to be effective in discriminating the three groups in discriminant analysis: Govt. denied to Promote Indigenous Technology of Snake and Rodent catching; Type of work – Primary, Type of Work – Secondary, Working Hours per day; Reason for not Providing Patta; Primary School available; Quality of Rice; Type of diseases; Medical aid provided by; Sources of Money for Health Care. Nearly 94 percent of the Irula Tribes are correctly classified in the discriminant analysis, indicating a very high success rate of the model framed by the author.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OF IRULA TRIBE IN STUDY AREA: MAJOR FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

Given the large scale violation of human rights of Irula Tribe exposed by this present study, their agenda becomes a burning issue for the incumbent district and the state government, a chance to correct decades of historically neglected, disadvantaged, exploited and marginalized Irula communities. The author attempted to provide some of the suggestions, which are not an exhaustive list of suggestions, but salient and major suggestions that are positive, proactive steps towards securing respect and enjoyment of human rights of Irula Tribe in the study area.

### **I. RIGHT TO DIGNITY AND EQUALITY**

#### **1.1. Social Distance and Discriminations:**

Irula Tribals work on the land owned by the upper castes. They still could not draw water from the same well or bathe or drink from in the same pond that they use. They are treated indifferently and prevented them entering into temples used by upper castes. They are denied access to public places, shops/hotels, and Government ration shops. They should not use common burial grounds and a public resorts. Moreover, they should not sit on chair / cot in the presences of owner or upper caste persons, or talk freely before upper caste people. The Tribal children could not play with children of upper castes. They are abused by calling by their Tribal name in public place.

The study reveals, that nearly 75 percent of the respondents do not talk freely with the upper caste people. Nearly 27 percent of respondents reported, that they are denied customary rights to passage / entry to public resorts. Furthermore, 29 percent of the respondents informed that they are denied the use burial ground. that nearly 36 percent of the respondents reported that they were ill –treated in public places by Governmental officials and other caste people in the village. Nearly 43 percent of the respondents informed that they were called by communal name. Public servants too are negligent to take actions against the perpetrators of such atrocities, despite the existence of The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. . It also indicates the violation of rights prescribed by the Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which emphasis, 'All are equal before law and entitled to equal protection against discrimination in violations of these declarations."

#### **Suggestions:**

- Priority has to be given to the immediate implementations of social legislations such as, The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, coupled with vigorous monitoring of the situation vise-versa protection of human rights of Irula Tribe. In this regard, police officials need to be sensitized to the provisions of such legislation as part of their training and refresher courses.
- Locality wise crimes against Tribes should be maintained up-to data, to enable open monitoring and anticipatory preventive action in atrocity prone villages or areas.
- Efforts should be made to provide Free Legal Aid to all Irula Tribe and the Legal Aid Cells of the block level, need to be strengthened further.
- An education drive to educate Irula Tribe about their rights and legal provisions that protect their rights and assertive of their rights. The law relating to human rights of Tribes should be simplified and disseminated widely among the Irula Tribe.

#### **1.2. Denial of Education Opportunities**

After independence, several steps have been taken by the Central, as well as State Government to educate the children of Scheduled Tribes in particular. Child Labour has been prohibited. The education of children up to the age of 14 years has been pronouncements as a Fundamental Right. The Directive Principles of the Constitution, which mandates free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years. According to the survey, nearly 96 per cent of the respondents of Irula Tribe have no schooling and nearly 40 percent of the Irula children of the respondents were not going to the school regularly. Almost 90 percent of the respondents stated that the Government educational benefits have not reached them. It is an irony that most of them are not even aware of existence of such schemes.

It was observed, that there are several reasons for the dropouts of Irula Children. Some of them includes (i) Poverty, which forces children between the age of 10 to 12 years to drop out from school to work and supplement family income. (ii) Distance to Schools, discrimination within the

schools from both teacher and non-Tribal students and poor teaching standards at school (iii) Most importantly, the absence of balwadis to take care of younger children, whilst children of schooling age can attend school, especially relevant in the case of Irula girl children; (iv) Inability to avail scholarships and hostel facilities, due to denial of community certificates and (v) Cultural unsuitability of the education syllabus to Irula Tribal children.

### **Suggestions:**

- Special efforts must be made to ensure that all the Irula Tribal children below the age of 14 years are provided with free, quality and compulsory primary education.
- The Government should provide education to the Irula girl children particularly, by running Balwadi (Child Day Care Centers). These centers take care of children below the age of 5 years. This will enable elder girl children of Irula Tribe to attend school as Balwadis' take care of younger one.
- Education-cum-motivation camps must be organized with the financial and technical support by the Government towards sensitization of Irula Tribe towards education and other awareness- raising initiatives.
- Moreover, the Government should intensively monitor the implementation of the Child Labour (Protection and Regulations) Act, 1993 on a regular basis, which are largely affected by Tribal children.

## **1.3 Denial of Reservations**

### **(a) Reservation in Government Employment**

In Tamil Nadu, since 1988, one percent is reserved for Scheduled Tribes in the educational and employment opportunities. In Central Government services with the statutory 7.5% reservation quota for Tribals, however, Tamil Nadu Tribals are being denied this right of entry to a greater extent. Furthermore, lack of information forthcoming from all Departments and Public Sector Units' stands in the way of monitoring of the status of reservation, being implemented by the Tamil Nadu Government

According to the survey, the random sampling of 410 Irula Tribe in the study area reveals that none of them were employed in Government services. The author observed that the reservation in employment has no meaning unless the proper educational opportunities are provided to Irula Tribe.

### **Suggestions:**

- The present reservation of one percent (1%) in employment and education of S.T's should be increased to three percent (3%) to enhance educational and economic development of Tribals. Particularly, to ensure employment opportunity for the Irula Tribe.
- Further, keeping with globalization and increasing privatization trends in the study area, and in the State, reservation should be extended to the private and corporate sectors.
- Lack of information on status of reservation, being implemented by the Tamil Nadu Government in employment opportunity provided to Tribes. Therefore, the Government should publish the details of employment given to Tribes so far, by Tribe wise list in each Government Departments and Public Sector Units.

### **(b) Issue of Community Certificates for the Tribes**

The community certificate is a vital piece of document that proves their Tribal status. This certificate opens up a range of affirmative beneficial measures ranging from educational or employment benefits to community access to Tribal development schemes and bank loans, to promote Tribal economic upliftment and redressal of hundreds of years of societal exclusion, economic exploitation and oppression.

The Irula Tribe generally reported that the issuance of community certificate is done by the Government and it takes a tortuous route of approvals from Village Administrative Officer/ Revenue Inspector / Zonal Deputy / Tahsildar and ultimately to the Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO). This is a long and tedious process ostensibly to prevent community certificate being issued to Non-Tribals, who stake a false claim. But in reality, Government officials giving false ST's community certificates by taking bribe are not uncommon. It is the Irulas who are given a tough deal and at the receiving end.

Inordinate delays in issuing community certificates have been a common problem in many villages in the study area. It is evident that around 48 percent of the respondents reported that they have been denied or endured protracted delays that amounted to negating their legitimate rights to avail reservations benefits.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Reservation of seats for Tribes in local bodies should be allocated in proportion to their population, and in any case, at least 1.9% at all levels.
- The Kancheepuram Revenue Divisional Officer & District Adidravida and Tribal Welfare Officer should immediately review all pending applications for issuance of Irula Tribals community certificates, conduct fair inquiries and issue community certificates to all eligible Irula Tribe with least delay.
- Necessary arrangements must be made to ensure streamlining and monitoring of the provisions of Scheduled Tribe community certificates to Irula Tribe, to eliminate time delays and official negligence by stipulating a maximum two-weeks period from date of application to receiving the community certificate.
- Adequate compensation may be paid to all Irula Tribe, who have suffered loss of education or employment opportunities or suffered in other ways, due to denial of community certificates by the district administration.

#### **1.4 Denial of Cultural Rights**

In the Human rights Context, one must realize that the Irula Tribe Culture was not less civilized, but differently civilized. It was observed that there are incidents of making hindrances from enjoying their cultural practices and beliefs, such as worshipping their Gods and Goddess and forceful interventions into Irula Tribe cultural life. Based on the primary data collected from 57 persons out of 410 respondents of Irula Tribe, reported that their rights to cultural freedom being violated by their non-Tribals neighbours. They are asked to stop singing and play music in the nights while worshipping Kanniamma Goddess. (On full moon day, during the month of Aadi, i.e., mid of July to mid August). It is a blatant violation to observe and perform their cultural rituals. The author observed that there are indirect interventions into the Irula Tribe Cultural life. The cultural osmosis is being witnessed by the advent of mainstream "cinema culture" displacing traditional folk arts, dance and songs. (Some places they maintain their traditional songs and dances) traditional clothes being discarded for saris, simple marriage being replaced by dowry system, there had been rapid changes in the composition of the food habits of the Irula. Now Irula Tribe have changed their healthy diets from traditional staples food to rice based food of grains and vegetable that are available in local markets.

#### **Suggestions:**

- The Government should recognise and protect the right of Irula Tribe to access their traditional sacred groves and moreover, to worship their Kanniamma Goddess without interferences from the neighbours of Irula hamlets.
- Specific Government agency should be established with adequate funds to document, and promote the Irula Indigenous Technology of snack and rodent catching, their herbal knowledge, their culture, religion, language, and history. It should be thereby aim at systematically breaking down the racial prejudices harboured by non-Tribes against the Irula community.
- In keeping with the secular foundations of the country, the Government should ensure that Tribal religion and religious practices are protected and promoted as a separate religion from mainstream religions. This would imply eschewing any form of religious conversion by use of force or material inducements.

#### **1.5. Denial of Political Rights**

##### **(i)Denial of Electoral Franchise:**

The Constitution of India provides political reservation for Tribals from Village Panchayat, to Legislative Assembly and Parliament in proportion to their populations. However, in reality Irula Tribe had been denied of electoral franchise to participate in elections. It is evident according to the survey conducted, more than one third of the Irula Tribe respondents are not provided with Election Identity card nor neither enlisted in voters list. They are circumstanced to stay away

from political participation. It is very much evident from the Irula Tribe samples collected from Avalur, Asoor, Rajampatti and Seeya Mangalam Villages.

The reasons for the non-inclusion in the political participation, is that the villages Panchayat did not recognize Irula Tribe as their village members. Even they are excluded in the population census. Their stay in the places are claimed to be unofficial and illegal. The Panchayat leaders deliberately deny them to be included in either in voters' lists or in below poverty line lists.

The author observed that ultimately there is need for policy level changes for enhancement of the Irula Tribe. Though the Scheduled Caste people are still poor and oppressed, have developed a political conscious to fight back and have started demanding their rights. Irulas do not even react and they are not even aware of their basic rights and human rights.

### **Suggestions:**

- To achieve political rights, Irula Tribe needs to become a political force, but the community is too small and thinly spread out all over Tamil Nadu. So strategically speaking, Irula Tribe needs to join hands with other oppressed people, like the Scheduled Castes. It is also necessary that the Irula communities must strengthen their unity first before going for an integrated approach.
- Resurvey of Irula Tribe population and include all of them in voters list before next general elections to Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu.
- All the Irula Tribe must be covered under BPL (Below Poverty Line) and provided with Ration Cards. To participate in the electoral process, they must be provided with election identity cards.
- Electoral booths should be set up in Tribal hamlets or accessible place to ensure free exercise of electoral rights.

### **(ii)Denial of Participation in Local Governance:**

In a comparative analysis of the various indicators (political organization, religion, ritual practices etc.) among the Irula Tribe in study area, it has been observed that the status of Irula Tribe is comparatively lower than that of non-Tribals. In the present modern Panchyat system, majority (nearly two third) of the Irula Tribe surveyed stated that they were not called or informed to participate in Panchayat meetings and discriminated and denied opportunity to express their opinions. The Irula Tribe are totally denied their legitimate right to participate in the village level decision-makings and public activities. The author could not find any Irula Tribe holding any Panchayat post in the study area.

### **Suggestions:**

- The process of decentralization of power to local Governance as envisaged in the 74th Constitutional Amendment should be expedited and Irula Tribal hamlet / ward participation must be ensured.
- Necessary policy has to be formulated to include the Irula Tribe to take part in the decision making process of local Governance. Moreover, the Irula Tribe should be given due representations to the local Panchayat system of governance and decision making irrespective of their population.
- The Social Activists and Non-Governmental Organisations must focused to increase lobbying and advocacy at the State, National and International level, so that Irula Tribe could leave in just and equitable society without any discrimination.

## **II.RIGHT TO OWN AND CONTROL LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **2.1. Landlessness and Unemployment:**

A major portion of Irula Tribes lands in the study area have either been classified as Government wasteland or common pastureland, primarily due to a lack of documentary proof of ownership that translated into non-recognition of Tribes rights over their traditional lands. They need land to perform religious functions, harvesting, reaping, playing and weeping they need the land of their own. Their livelihood is dependent on land. Displacing them in the name of development is to destroy their very life, culture and existences. The study reveals that 98 percent of the Irula Tribe respondents in the study area do not have any cultivatable land. The Irula Tribe surveyed reported that in every village, traditionally there was a separate land given for Irula Tribe,

Scheduled Castes people, like Dhobi (Washer man) and Barber. But today, Irular do not own any traditional land.

In several villages surveyed, the Irula Tribe stated that they are unsecured, threatened and forced to vacate the places where they are living for several years. It is evident from the villages of Konerikupam, Seeya Mangalm, Naickenpettai, Chinayan Sattiram, Thenari, Neervalur, Avalur, Natha Nellur (Harassing to vacate), Kannigapuram, and Asoor. To date, their struggle to regain their lost lands has not progressed, the Government refusing to step in to safeguard the Irula lands.

### **Drawbacks of Land Reforms**

In the area of land reforms, most of the Irula Tribe remains unaware of the possibility of approaching the Government to acquire land under Government land distribution schemes for Scheduled Tribes. As stated earlier, out of 1,84,945 acres of surplus land assigned to 1,46,673 persons so far, in which merely 275 acres are provided to 205 persons belonging to the Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu. The author could not find relevant data on how much surplus land was assigned, exclusively to Irula Tribe. However, only a meagre 0.03 percent of Scheduled Tribes were provided with surplus land by the Government. Therefore, it is evident that the Government had neglected to provide them or even denied them the provisions of cultivable land under any National or State agrarian / land distribution scheme.

The Tribes economic development has always been under threat because of the local traders and other anti-social elements, who are taking advantage of their ignorance, But now the incidents of land alienation has been considerably brought down and it is not so frequent now, as it was before, States the Government reports. Provision in the Board of Revenue Standing Order BSO 15-40 prohibits alienation of land by the Tribes to Non-Tribes and it has gone a long way in helping the Tribes to retain their lands.

However, the author observed that the transfers of Tribals lands to Non-Tribals have not been statutorily prohibited, nor have provisions been made for the restoration of alienated lands to their Tribal owners. Instead, Board of Revenue Standing Order BSO 15-40 is in operation, preventing the transfer of lands belonging only to two Tribal communities, the Malayalis and Sholagas, by sale, mortgage or gift without the permission of the Divisional Officer. Therefore this Standing Order do not benefit the Irula Tribe towards protection from land alienation.

### **Suggestions**

- A systematic and comprehensive re-survey of all land should be undertaken with the participation of Irula Tribal Community. The survey should be undertaken within a specific time frame and should be widely publicized, with the aim of giving land patta to all identified Irula Tribe land.
- As one third of the Irula respondents live in Machal Porampokku (Postures Land), the Government could provide patta to them based on the animal's population and availability of pastureland in the village.
- Landless Irula Tribe should be provided with a minimum of 1 acres of cultivable land within a timeframe of five years.
- A transparent monitoring system should be created to examine the progress made under the land alienation law, with annual reports to be submitted to the Tamil Nadu Government and the National SC/ST Commission.
- Tamil Nadu Government should give priority for the provision of financial aid and infrastructure facilities to develop herbal knowledge of Irula Tribe.
- A transparent monitoring system should be created to examine the progress made under the land alienation law, with the annual report to be submitted to the Tamil Nadu Government and the National S.C and S.T Commission.

### **2.2 Denial of Rights over Natural Resources / (Minor Forest Products)**

Forest is playing a vital role in the lives of Irula Tribe, in terms of being both a vital sources of spiritual life, hounding, as well as providing them forest produce and traditional medicines. Secondary sources of data provided that once upon a time Kancheepuram was a land of huge forest. The Irula were hunters and moved from place to place for their every day needs. However, the advent of the Forest Department and reserved forest system has created conflict with the Tribals and their lifestyles.

According to the survey, conducted by the Author reveals that nearly two third percent of the Irula respondents have no access to forest products. They almost joined the mainstream of living. The remaining one third percent of the Irula Tribe engaged in traditional hunting and depending on forests products. They reported that their right to Minor Forest Produce (MFP) had been neglected, the Traditional MFP, such as: medicinal seeds, honey, tamarind, firewood and so on. Irula Tribe diet includes a number of small animals that occur in the scrub jungles. According to the surveyed, Irula Tribe reported that they hunt small mammals, such as: the black-napped Hare (In Tamil named 'Musal' or 'Muyal'); the monitor Lizard (Udumbu); the small Indian Civet (Ponugu Poonai); Mongoose (Keeripillai); and so on. In addition to mammals they also catch common green frog (Pacchai Thavali); Tortoises and (Aammai) and Turtles. The birds trapped and relished by Irular include; Little egret (Vellai kokku); Jungle fowl (Kaatukozhi); Black winged stilts (Ullan); White-breasted Kingfisher (Meenkothi); Quail (Kaadai); Partridges (Cowthari); and White-breasted water hen (Kanakozhi). In addition to the small mammals, birds and frogs, Irular also catch other aquatic animals such as snails, crab and a variety of fresh water fish. Based on the survey conducted by the Author among Irula Tribe, nearly one third of the respondent reported that the non-Tribes, Government officials, and forest officers restricted to catching of fish, crabs and other mammals.

### **2.3. Denial of Irulas Mastery in the Art of Snake and Rodent Catching:**

With the awakening of environmental consciousness, a blanket ban was imposed by the Government on the snake catching and sale of snakeskin. The ban came as a major big blow to the very survival of the Irulas. This assumes greater significance particularly in view of the fact that no alternatives were provided to the Tribe for their livelihood. Consequently, the Irulas were pushed into a situation of extreme poverty and destitution. When such measures and policies threaten the very survival of the people, natural justice requires that provision should be made to cater to the basic needs of all those affected by such policies.

After considerable correspondence, permission was granted on certain restriction on the number and type of snakes to be caught. Ironically, Trapping of snakes is highly labour intensive, as well as irregular and involves an element of luck. It often entails the investment of several days / week of intensive search before a snake is trapped. In view of this, the element of opportunity cost (Time & Human Energy) needs to be taken into account but it not measured while determining the appropriate wages for Irulas. The International market rate for snake venom is relatively very high. The Irula Tribe are paid Rs.100/- (Rupees hundred only) for catching Saw-Scaled viper, which is also to be of the size of 9.0" to 12" length. It may be noted that the cost of Saw-Scaled Viper Venon per gram is Rs.30,000/- in India.

The number of snakes to be caught by the Irulas had been fixed by the Forest Department. In order to capture snakes the Irula Tribe should get permission (Trapping license to capture snakes) from the Chief Wild life Warden, Forest Department, Government of Tamil Nadu. The Author observed that there is a procedural delay in obtaining license for catching snakes. The standard of living of Irula Tribe is not improved due to this job.

Based on the survey conducted, the Irula Tribe who are engaged in snake catching as their primary work stated that they catch snakes based on the orders given by Irula Snake Catchers Industrial Cooperative Society in accordance with the demand of venom in the market. They should not catch all the permitted four types snakes all the times. Occasionally, when the society is in need of Russell's viper, the members of the society will be in search of such snake. Trapping of particular types of snakes is highly labour intensive and moreover, they cannot catch and store other type of snake in their home. All these inconsiderate Governmental procedures drastically reduce the income of Irula Tribe and their way of existences.

### **Suggestions:**

- To recognize labour intensive work involved in catching snakes and it is high-risk job is which very lives of the trapper are at stake.
- Pay Increased wages and increase the number of snake to be caught; moreover the Government to issue trapping license without delay.
- To promote the International marketing for venom leading to high wages, will improve their living conditions.
- Devising scientific advancements in the Irula methodology of rat catching. Since rats can also be a rich sources of chicken feed and it is highly demanded by several poultry forms. It is

estimated that approximately 10,000 rats would be required to produce a ton of chicken feed. The Irula Snake Catchers Association were confident that it can easily supply five tons of rats in a month.

- Mutual agreement between the Irula and land owners to raise the wages. By catching rats Irula indirectly save approximately 10 Kgs of Paddy stored in one rat hole.
- Promote manufacturing and marketing handy crafts with the rat skins for their alternative earnings.

#### **2.4. Denial to Protect and Promote the Herbal Knowledge of Irula Tribe:**

The reputation of Irular as herbalists is widely acknowledged by all communities. However, this is not a means of livelihood for all Irular, since only a few of them in each village claim the traditional knowledge and practice. Other village communities seek Irular for medical treatment, especially for poisonous snakebites. Their immense knowledge of the insects and snakes and long use of plants have made them experts in this area. Both Irular men and women are sought after for their healing prowess. It is highly skilled treatment, which unfortunately, is not recognized as such because it happens to be indigenous to isolated and socio-economically backward Irula Tribe. According to the survey conducted, 64 persons of the Irula Tribe respondents, who possessed herbal knowledge, reported that their herbal knowledge is not properly recognized and promoted by the Government. It was observed that the indigenous technology of Irula Tribe has not been properly utilized for the socio-economic development of their community.

#### **Suggestions:**

The Government must improve of the economic conditions of the Irula Tribe, by safeguarding their herbal knowledge by the following means:

- Documentation and channelizing of Irula Knowledge of herbal medicines;
- Encouraging the Irula to join the social forestry movement for the development of Wastelands for their herbal products
- Providing profitable sale outlets for their herbal products;
- Reviving the rapidly disappearing traditional skills of Irula, in such a way as to ensure both economic benefits to them and sustainability of the natural resources.

### **III. RIGHT TO WORK AND FAIR WAGES**

#### **3.1 Denial of Right to Employment, Occupation or Profession:**

The primary work of the Irula Tribe surveyed in the study area identified as, agricultural allied works, cutting woods/tree roots, fishing, working in rice mills, rat catching, snake catching, stone quarrying, and few involved in embroidery work.

The various secondary sources of data provides that despite poverty conditions among most Tribal communities, when it comes to Tribal earning their livelihood, both Government officials and non-Tribal groups are being the greater perpetrator in this regard. However, according to the Irula Tribe surveyed only few about four percent of the respondents (15 persons) stated that non-Tribal have prevented or hindered them from earning their livelihood, such as getting admission into any work or for practicing any profession or carrying out any occupation trade or business. (Such as, keeping cycle shop in the village, vegetable selling, provisional stores or any other business). The author observed that majority of the respondents around 96 percent does not complain against the non-Tribal communities and Government, but they expressed their inability to engage in any other occupation, trade or business due to non-availability of resources (funds), proper education, lack of specialized skills, etc.

As Irula Tribe in study area summed up their situation, the lack of vocational training facilities available or promoted their inability to equip themselves with new skills to gain employment in any of the nearby industrial companies or other enterprises outside of daily wage labour. This was sadly a statement expressed across all village/hamlets, indicating a huge gap to be filled between Government rhetoric and the reality in Tribe lives. The Author observed that the Government neglect or denial of any measures to encourage handicrafts, rural industries and even recent Self-Help Group programmes for Irular Tribe. Though the Tamil Nadu Government has on paper, several employment schemes in place that focus on Scheduled Tribes, such as employment schemes such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment Schemes (TRYSEM), Tribal Co-operative Marketing

Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED); Financial Assistance to Scheduled Tribes For Economic Development (FASTED), but Irular Tribal beneficiaries remain absolutely low or even none in these schemes.

However, in the present study, almost 78 percent of the Irula Tribe stated that their wives and their family members were not involved in Self-Help Programme. About 22 percent of the Irula Tribe surveyed are enrolled in Self-Help Programme recently with the help of Non-Governmental organization in the study area. Generally, Irula Tribal women interviewed stated that they are not benefited by this scheme. The study reveals that Irula Tribe are much perpetuated and vulnerable to non-implementations of schemes compared to other marginalized groups in the given system of Governance.

### **Suggestions:**

- Technical and Vocational Training Programme should be formulated to enhance occupation diversification and employment opportunities for the Irula Tribe.
- Loan and credit facilities for Irula Tribe, particularly need to be strengthen the Irula Tribe women Self-Help Groups, as well as formation of herbal medicines cooperatives, so that Irula can create a niche in the market to sell directly their indigenous products.

### **3.2 Bonded Labourers / Forced Labour:**

Caught in a situation of constant economic insecurity and chronic poverty conditions transmitted across generation, Irula Tribe are vulnerable to economic exploitation in the form of bonded labour. This is evident from a study in 1990, which revealed that 45% of bonded labourers in Tamil Nadu are Tribes. There are several reported, and many unreported, cases of Irula Tribe being used as bonded labourers.

The Irula Tribe lives in worst conditions in the rice mills where they work. Dozens of entire families live and work for decades inside the mills. There is complete lack of health and hygiene. They are simply ruled over by the mill owners. They are totally ignorant about the happenings of outside, they do not even knowledge of the benefits that are eligible for them. According to the survey conducted, the Irula Tribe are being forced or enticed into bonded labour system prevailing in Rajampettai, Avalur and Asoor villages of study area.

Irula bonded labourers from rice mills where they are still in bondage and denied their basic human rights. It is reported from the Irula respondents that they are given loan up to Rs.5000/- , which is adjusted against their payment of wages. Since they are illiterate, the rice mill owners manipulated the register containing loan taken and payment made. The Irula Tribe has necessarily to accept what the owner says and gives. The rate at interest and deduction on loan amount is not clear. The couple (both husband and wife) are paid Rs.50/- for the whole day of hard work. They are forced to work around 14 hours a day. Except for time for cooking, eating, washing clothes and sleeping, they work endlessly in the rice mills. They are never permitted to shift to another type of work before settling their loan amount. This is a clear violation of Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which emphasis that 'Slavery in any form is prohibited'.

### **Suggestions:**

- The Government should intensively monitor the implementation Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, of the on a regular basis, which are largely affected by Scheduled Tribes.
- The Government should pass legislation specifically abolishing the debts of Tribal People owed to Non-Tribal and also private money lending consequently, which leads to boned labour / forced labour of Irula Tribe.
- The District Administration in Kancheepuram must take appropriate measures to identify, release and rehabilitate the Irula Tribe working as bonded labourers in rice mills and brick kiln industries in study area.
- Their working hours as well as wages paid should be regulated in conformity with the existing labour laws.

### **3.3 Denial of Minimum / Just Wages:**

About 25 percent of the Tamil Nadu Tribal population depends on minor forest produce (MFP), and 10 percent on their own resources and skills such as handicrafts, snake-catching and hunting / gathering. The rest are landless agricultural labourers who get seasonal work and are at the

mercy of landlords and estate owners. Wages are often much lower than stipulated under the Minimum Wage Act prescribed by Government of Tamil Nadu.

According to the survey conducted **reveals that 75 percent of the Irula Tribal are being denied the minimum living wage of Rs. 45/- per day.** In almost every village Tribal women workers, are being economically deprived of a fair daily wage. The daily wage range for Tribal women is Rs.23/- to Rs. 35/-, while for men; the range is from Rs. 50/- to Rs. 60/-. By and large cutting wood and tree roots pay slightly better wages than agricultural related works. In the study area any Tribal questioning their low wages and economic exploitation at the hands of non-Tribal landlords faces the consequences of dismissal from their job.

### **3.4. Denial of Equal Pay for Equal Work:**

In terms of discrimination encountered by Tribals in the violation of their right to equal pay for equal work, this was a frequent or constant feature in the study area. Based on the survey, Irula Tribal respondents in the Natha Nellur, Nallur, Thonan Kulam, Ullavour of Waljabad Block, and Avalur, Asoor in Kancheepuram block mentioned that it is the land owners, Contractors and Rice mill owners who are discriminating against them in terms of wages. It was reported that whilst Tribal women are paid a daily wage of Rs. 23/- non-Tribal women receive Rs. 40/- and Tribal men are paid Rs. 50/-, as compared with non-Tribal men, who are paid Rs. 70/-, which clearly indicates the exploitation and racial discrimination.

#### **Suggestions:**

- Priority has to be given to the immediate implementations of labour laws, such as the Minimum Wages Act, and Equal Remuneration Act.
- The Minimum Wages Act should be amended to include a provision to the effect that the daily wages of coolie labourers in all economic activities should be determined by the principle that the earnings of one person in a family should be sufficient for the maintenance of the entire family.
- A Policy must be evolved, along with appropriate administrative machinery, to ensure the implementation of minimum wages; equal pay for equal work for men and women, Tribals and Non-Tribals, as well as non-discrimination in terms of working conditions and other facilities should be created.
- The need for entrepreneurship schemes and income generating schemes which liberate Irula Tribal from the clutches of land lords and rice mill owners.

### **3.5 Denial to from Associations or Unions and to Make Collective Bargaining**

As the most of the Irula Tribe are daily wage labourers, are unorganized labourers. There is no trade union or association to protect their rights. Based on the survey conducted by the Author nearly 85 percent of the respondents do not belong to any union or Associations. Similarly nearly 96 percent of the respondents reported that they could not make any collective bargaining in the study area. There exists the lack of political support, lack of clear perspective and vision among the NGO's, lack of will and support for Tribal issues from general public and apathy among the Government officers to understand their problem or in preventing their basic human rights

#### **Suggestions:**

- The Political Parties and Trade Unions in the study area must be sensitized towards the human rights violation of Irula Tribe and they must work for the rights of Irula Tribe.
- The Irula Tribe must be registered themselves with the Trade Union or Political Parties in a phased manner and the due representation must be given to them in the Union or Political Party.
- The Irula Tribe must be sensitized through education-cum- motivation camps towards assertive of their rights, they must organized to make collective bargaining in the all types of their traditional works, particularly, in cutting woods, tree roots, catching snakes and rats, etc.,

## **IV. RIGHT TO HOUSING / SHELTER AND BASIC AMENITIES**

### **4.1 Housing and Settlement of Irula Tribe:**

In the human rights path, the right to housing could be defined as 'the right for every women, man and child to a secure a place to live in peace and dignity'. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution

provides that no person be deprived of his or her life and personal liberty. The Supreme Court affirms that the right to life necessarily implies access to basic amenities including adequate housing. The Author observed that majority of houses belongs to Irula Tribe are not sufficient during both summer and rainy seasons. The plight of the Scheduled Tribes with respect to housing is miserable. They live in ill-ventilated huts put up in unhygienic conditions. They are also not economically sound to provide themselves with good houses. A typical Irula houses is built of small mud wall and thatched. It is hardly 10 to 15 ft long, 10 ft wide and 6 to 8 ft high. Such houses are thatched mostly with Palmyra palm leaves and each houses usually has one room with no windows or kitchens. Food is cooked outside the house.

The Author observed that there are few houses constructed by Government schemes and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). The present study reveals that few Group houses constructed by Indira Memorial scheme and constructed by Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP). Moreover, 12 houses constructed by **Hand in Hand** (NGO) at Vellakulam village and 11 houses were constructed by **WELLS** (NGO) at Puliambakkam village. It is true that the Irulas are not used to concrete houses. Also the Government has not given any thought to develop an appropriate design. But with time, the Irulas learn to live in the houses, they remodel the house to suit their needs. The allotted land can be used of other purposes like home gardening or setting up a small shop. Ironically, negligible group-houses constructed by the Government and NGO's for Irula Tribe in the study area meets a fringe of their housing problems. Even these houses face lack of basic amenities, even the electricity in their house and hamlets.

#### **4.2. Dispossession, Interference and Forced Evictions:**

In the context of human rights, the right to housing is not restricted to shelter but encompasses the right to live in security of tenure, availability of essential services. The author of this article, advocates to deepen the understanding of the essential elements of the right to adequate housing is to include elements such as the right to privacy, participation and freedom from dispossession. According to the Irula Tribe surveyed, in many hamlets Irula Tribe reported that they are prevented from residing in the place of their choice. It is observed that the Irula Tribe living in many hamlets / villages of the study area, viz., Konerikupam, Seeya Mangalam, Naickenpettai, Chinayan Sathiram, Kamba Rajapuram, Puliambakkam, Singadivakkam, Vella Kulam, Allaputh Arikari, Nattapettai, Elayanar Velur, Vaiyavour, Alavour, Neervalur, Natha Nallur, Ponnari Karai. Avalur, Ullavour, Thennari, Sankarapuram, Varnavasi, Kannikapuram, Asoor and Rajampettai villages where Irula Tribe live in constant fear of being driven away any moment by the local villagers, owners or Government officials. It is emphasised that in human rights context, right to housing should be seen as the right to live some where in peace, security and dignity, which are totally ignored for Irula Tribe.

An interview with the Village Administrative Officers and Irula Tribe for not giving house site pattas had revealed that they are living in the common lands of various Panchyats lands, such as community pastures, community forests, river land, Village water reservoirs such as ponds, irrigation tanks, etc., which are considered as Purampokkku land that belongs to Government. Denial of house site patta has severe implications such as, denial of voters list, ration card (access to Public Distribution Scheme), access to electricity for both homes and public place in their hamlet / village, portable drinking water, decent link road, public transport facilities, public health care center and so on. The Government apathy is evident to look into the matters of proper secured houses for Irula Tribe

What is more constant and hence common form of harassment in the restriction of Irula Tribal freedom of movement and access to the main village is restricted. Freedom of movement is either in terms of residing in a place of their choice or in moving freely about their village proximity. According to the survey conducted among Irula Tribe, more than two third of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with Panchayat, most of which are general constituencies and hence headed by Non-Tribals. They feel that the local Panchayat leader do not even look after their basic needs of housing, despite their petitions / request.

It was observed that the Government could provide alternative housing place for Irula Tribe living in water resources, which is important for the villages. However, Macheal Purmpokku (Pastures land) could be given patta, based on the animals' population and availability of pastureland in the village, which could protect and promote adequate housing rights for the Irula Tribe, but there is no indication of doing this.

### 4.3. Basic Amenities:

Irula Tribe have been denied access to electricity for their houses. Based on the survey conducted by the Author, about 78 percent of Irula Tribe has been denied access to electricity for their houses and even streetlights in public places. The study also reveals that majority of Irula Tribe do not have access to primary health care centers. The Irula Tribe expressed their dissatisfaction with the Panchayat, most of which are general constituencies and headed by Non-tribes. In most of the selected villages where the Panchayat has no Tribal representatives, very little of public funds are spent to improve the basic qualities of life of the Tribal hamlets. While the Tribal hamlets are without electricity, clean and safe drinking water, public lighting and roads, the dominant caste (non-Tribal) dominated Panchayat, spend Government money to the benefit their communities in the main village.

### Suggestions:

- Forced evictions, which are viewed by the UN as a gross violation of human rights. Forced evictions are the removal people from their homes or lands against their will, directly or indirectly attributable to the State. The ultimate responsibility of preventing evictions is the obligations of the State.
- As Irula Tribe living in illegal settlements, alternate site must be provided to the Irula Tribe who are living in Kalvai (water ways) Porampokku, kuttai (pond) Porampokku, Atthu (river) Pormpokku, Eari (Lake) Porampokku and private lands. Proper arrangements for sanitation and drinking water should be made in alternate Irula village / hamlets
- Strict action should be taken against the non-Tribals who threaten or misbehave, dispossess, interfere and involve in forced evictions of Irula Tribe from their inhabitants.
- Acquisition of Prompokku land by Government for the residential purpose (present and future needs) that caters to all poor and vulnerable sections, especially the Irula Tribe.
- Immediate action must be made to the issuing of Pattas to Irula Tribe who are living in Machal (Pastures), Thopu and Malai (hill) Porampokku, places for more than 14 years.
- To allocate appropriate budget for Tribal housing, particularly, the Irula Tribe on plains. Moreover, alternative Housing Policy alone is not sufficient and regular and sustained follow up is needed.
- The Tamil Nadu Government should implement a time bound Programme for the provision of basic facilities to all Irula Tribe, whether located in machal porampokku or other panchayat land to give them social dignity and economic capability to rise to levels or par with the Non-Tribals, making them active partners in national building.
- Supreme Court's interpretation of Article 21 as including the right to livelihood, the right to housing and right to Dignity must be upheld under all circumstance.
- The present unit cost of each house in plain areas is Rs.32, 000/-. Therefore group-houses for the all Irula Tribe is considered to be very expensive for the State, it is suggested access to cheap housing materials for constructing durable housing colonies for Irula Tribe. They also must access to easy finance schemes for making inhabit at affordable to all.
- Creating feasible housing designs for developing healthy habitat environment.
- Basic amenities such as electricity in their homes and hamlets, proper road, access able to community hall, children playground, primary school, crèche facilities, health centres, etc., should be provided to Irula Tribe in phased manner,

## V. RIGHT TO HEALTH (including eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition)

### 5.1 Right to Food and Free from Starvation:

According to the expert group of the Planning Commission, the minimum nutritional requirement of 2400 calories per person, per day is considered to be an essential and minimum need of an average person in rural India. Based on the survey conducted by the Author, nearly 96 percent of the Irula Tribe stated that they are not getting sufficient food for three times a day. Moreover, it is reported that the calories prescribed as minimum nutritional requirements are not available to 80 percent of the Irula Tribe in the Study area.

Based on the survey conducted by the Author, nearly 42 percent of the Irula Tribe stated that they are not provided with ration card and have no access to Public Distribution System. The non-issue of ration card to the deserving Irula Tribe led to discrimination and even to starvation. The Author observed that the failure of Public Distribution System to provide Ration Cards for all the Irula Tribe, who are living in below poverty line is the burning issue in the study area.

The Author understands that asserting the right to food does not imply that Government shall be responsible for directly fulfilling individuals' need for food. Nevertheless, the Government is obligated to facilitate individuals' efforts to meet food needs by creating an economic, political, and social environment that will allow all the marginalized people, especially the Tribals to strive to secure food for survival. It is the obligation of the state to redress these problems.

### **Suggestions:**

- Right to food availability for all sections of the community, particularly those who are socially / economically underprivileged, particularly the Irula Tribe should be ensured especially, in a situation of adequate food reserves in the country.
- Survey should be conducted among the Irula Tribe on the availability of food and nutrition and extend of starvation prevailing in the study area.
- The Public Distribution System (PDS) needs to be revamped to ensure food security (in terms of good quality and quantity) for all and especially, the Irula Tribe who are actually living in below poverty line.
- Denial of Ration Card to 42 percent of the Irula Tribe respondents led to discrimination. Starvation is a clear human rights violation. Therefore it is suggested to include all Irula (Primitive Tribe) in the Public Distribution System.
- The Government should make necessary efforts towards adequate access of essential foods such as rice, wheat, maize, barley and millet to the Irula Tribe at affordable rates according to their family size.
- It is suggested to form grain banks within the villages, the objective of this bank is to provide safeguard against starvation during the lean season when the marginalized people, especially the Irula Tribe do not have purchasing power. It allows the needy to borrow food from the grain bank till they are able to repay the grains back to the grain bank. It helps protecting persons living below poverty line.

### **5.2. Health Care Services:**

The author attempt to interpret the right to health care, in terms of: education concerning health problems and the methods for preventing and controlling them; promotion of food supply and proper nutrition; an adequate supply of safe water and basic sanitation; maternal and child health care, including family planning; immunization against major infectious diseases; prevention and control of locally endemic diseases; appropriate treatment of common diseases and injuries; and provision of essential drugs. This would form the essential health care package for a common citizen.

Based on the survey conducted, nearly six percent of the respondents suffered from anemia due to lack of Iron and B2 vitamins. Consequently, they had the problems of blood loss, symptoms such as, dizziness, headache, and dimness of vision, Stomach problems represented by three percent of the respondents due to dysentery with symptoms of loose stools, blood in stool, abdominal pain, fever and dehydration. Tuberculosis represented by 22 percent of the respondents, which affects their lungs, symptoms of the diseases shared as persistent cough, lethargy and weight loss. Nearly 21 percent of the respondents suffers from Coronary Artery diseases due to smoking, tobacco, alcohol with dietary deficiencies. Moreover, this disease occurs due to the occupation of Irula Tribe involved in catching rats, which has severe health hazard due to smoke inhaled by them. Malaria represented by one third of the respondents due to mosquito and unclean, contaminated water, symptoms of malaria resulted in intermittent fever attended with shivering.

Medical aid is availed by the Irula Tribe by Self Medication / Home Treatment, Government Doctors, Private Doctors, Traditional healers or Sooth Sayers. Unlike in the past, today majority of Irula Tribe approach the Government doctors for treatments. Access to medical help is even more difficult for Irula Tribe than for other rural groups, because of discrimination, distances and poverty. People have witnessed the active apathy of doctors and administrators towards the Irulas, even in cases childbirth and serious injury.

According to the survey, the majority of (51 percent) of the respondents stated that they are not properly treated at the Primary Health Centre at Walajabad and Government hospitals. The reasons behind their dissatisfaction are due to the non-availability of adequate number of doctors and often complicated with non-availability of necessary drugs. The Author also observed that among the purpose of the loan, Health care expenditure is the common cause of Irula Tribe to

fall into indebtedness and bonded labour. These facts all serve to indicate a lacuna in terms of the Government's commitment to securing the right to a health for the Irula Tribe.

### **Suggestions:**

- The core obligation of the State is to provide minimum services including health and medical care to all categories of people, especially the people below the poverty line. It is duty of the Government to increase the access of vulnerable sections of people, including Tribals, to appropriate and user-friendly health services.
- The Government should take steps to rationalization of drug purchase, especially to common diseases such as TB, Malaria, Typhoid drugs distribution to primary health centres and subcentres through fair price drug outlets which are accessible to marginalized people especially the Irula Tribe.
- Identifying the problems faced by the Irula Tribe in accessing health care (e.g. availability of medicines for common ailments at affordable prices, emergency services, x-ray facilities at affordable cost) and it is essential to minimize the distance by locating the Public health Centres closer to the community.
- Taking up projects for health campaigns on the pattern of literacy campaigns and organizing health awareness camps exclusively for Irula Tribe with the help of NGO's in the study area. The crucially necessary empowerment of Irula Tribal women includes the family planning opportunities and other health care facilities.
- Documenting the magnitude and type of the occupational health problems of Irula Tribe, initiating appropriate preventive and remedial measures will be developed, especially the Irula Tribe who engage in rat catching subjected to coronary artery diseases due to inhaling of smoke, while capturing the rats from its burrows.
- Regular Training Programmes for doctors/nurses/health workers. Statistics on health need are not often available either with the Government or the public health institutions. It is, therefore, suggested to collect reliable data by the Government departments / Institutions for appropriate planning.

### **MALNUTRITION:**

Hunger and Malnutrition are caused not just by a lack of economic activity but also by lack of access to health care, education, clean water, and sanitary living conditions. It is the obligation of the State to redress these problems. Women and children have the right to special health services, particularly, women with respect to pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period and children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy atmosphere.

In the past, Tribals were supposed to be the healthiest community because of the natural surroundings they live in. They are physically fit, sturdy, agile and active having no major health problems. They could walk 50 to 60 kms every day to collect Minor Forest Products. Malnutrition figures are high among Irulas. Tribal children are weaned even before the age of one year. The lack of adequate proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and trace elements in their diet, particularly protein and calories, lead to a number of deficiencies. A study indicates that 85 percent of the children suffer from protein and energy deficiency that makes them susceptible to many infectious diseases. The Tribes hardly get any protein food and it affects their physical / mental growth and their reproductive system.

The basic right of a child is the right to development. Most of the brain growth occurs up to the initial three years of life. The children have a right to adequate nutrition and health care including adequate immunization for realizing their potential. However, the Irula Tribal children were affected by malnutrition. Majority of Irula Tribe stated that their children in the family is affected by underweight, less in height, skin diseases, problem of change in hair colour as brownish due to malnutrition.

It was observed that the Mid-day Meals Programme could play effective role in the welfare of Irula Tribe children. Because the scheme aims: to provide adequate nutrition to economically disadvantaged children; to improve the health and nutritional status of children; to develop their mental and physical ability and to increase the enrolment in schools and reduce dropouts. The author emphasis the qualitative improvement that is urgently required, if the meals are to achieve their full potentials.

The study conducted among Irula Tribals reveals that, most of them lack nutritional food items. During the survey, it was reported that the non-availability of essential nutritional food items

such as; Cereals, Egg, Meat, Fish, Vegetables, Fruits and Milk was not consumed by 80 to 90 percent of the Irula Tribe. The Author observed that poverty and income disparities are the main causes for the non-consumption of nutritional food items for the Irula Tribe. Moreover, the non-availability of nutritious food items, which leads to mal-nutrition of children below 5 years, infant mortality, women health problems respect to pregnancy and death during child birth and postnatal period among Irula Tribe. The author emphasis that, **“a future of sustainable development begins with safeguarding the health of every child”**.

### **Suggestions:**

- Government must make specific functional nutritional interventional programmes for Irula Tribe and it must be focused on all round intervention rather than the narrow supplemental approach.
- The focus of family welfare programme should be community based led to child survival and safe motherhood. There is need to provide an integrated ante-natal, natal, and post-natal care and child health service through the Primary Health Care institutions linked with appropriate referral network.
- General dietary intake plays a pivotal role in determining the nutritional status, survival of children and pregnant women health problems. Therefore, Nutritional Food supplementation by the Government, during pregnancy will eradicate infant deaths and improve birth weight of child.
- Crèches / Day Care Centre scheme are essential for the children below 5 years of age, which are focused on immunization, nutrition, medical and health care. There is need to strengthen participation of Irula children in this scheme.
- Irula Tribe should be provided information related to the right to nutrition and provision of relevant services. Emphasized on clean drinking water and sanitary facilities, health education and follow up services in association with the primary health unit in village / hamlet levels.
- Promote awareness on health issues among Irula Tribe, improve the utilization of existing primary health centres and Government health programmes at the village level. Use intervention in health as the first step in building on women’s movements, especially seeking cooperative of Self-Help Group besides NGO’s involvement in health awareness among Irula Tribe.

### **Conclusions:**

Various Constitutional safeguards and legislative provisions for the wellbeing of indigenous people in India, during the past seventy years of independence notwithstanding, the Constitutional promises of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for them have never been fulfilled. The Judiciary plays a vital role in safeguarding the human rights of Tribes, through various pronouncements. But they make only a very tiny dent in to the systematic, large scale human rights violations of Scheduled Tribes in India.

It is the earnest desire and hope of the author, that the findings of this Research work will serve as sharp indicators to activists and policy-makers both in the Governmental and Non-governmental Organisations, contribute to formulate measures that would help to eliminate the human rights violation of Scheduled Tribes, particularly, the Irula Tribe in the study area of south India.

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